

State Parks to conduct fire ops in basin

California State Parks may continue prescribed fire operations beginning March 14, weather permitting.

On the North and West shores, operations may take place in Burton Creek, Sugar Pine Point and D.L. Bliss state parks. To view a map with project locations and details, go **online**.

Residual smoke may be seen in locations where operations have taken place over the last several weeks.

To receive prescribed fire notifications, send an email to pa_ltbmu@fs.fed.us.

Heavenly set to make modest upgrades

The U.S. Forest Service last week gave the go-ahead for Heavenly Mountain Resort to proceed with plans to improve amenities on the mountain.

Projects include upgrading the existing skiing and snowboarding terrain near the Tamarack lift at the top of the gondola. Obstacles will be removed and the Tamarack Return Trail widened.

Trees will be removed from beneath the Blue Streak zipline.

A permanent ticket sales kiosk will be built adjacent to the Bear Cave Ski School near Tamarack Lodge. This will replace

the temporary structures that are currently in use.

A 300-foot magic carpet surface lift will be installed for lessons.

Work is expected to start this spring.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Man dies while clearing snow in Truckee

A 62-year-old Truckee man died Sunday when the vehicle he was using for snow removal slammed into a garage.

Truckee police said it appears there was a medical event while the man was driving. The self-employed contractor was pronounced dead at the scene.

The incident occurred in the early afternoon of March 13 on Palisade Street in the Armstrong subdivision of Truckee.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Many state legislatures

exempt themselves from record laws

By David A. Lieb, AP

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. — State capitols are often referred to as “the people’s house,” but legislatures frequently put up no-trespassing signs by exempting themselves from public-records laws.

That tendency was apparent when the Associated Press sought emails and daily schedules of legislative leaders in all 50 states. The request was met with more denials than approvals.

Some lawmakers claimed “legislative immunity” from the public-records laws that apply to most state and local officials. Others said secrecy was essential to the deliberative process of making laws. And some feared that releasing the records could invade the privacy of citizens, creating a “chilling effect” on the right of people to petition their government.

Without access to such records, it’s harder for the public to know who is trying to influence their lawmakers on important policy decisions.

“The public has a right to know what their elected officials are doing, because it’s the people’s job to hold those folks politically accountable,” said Peter Scheer, executive director of the First Amendment Coalition, a San Rafael-based nonprofit that advocates for greater openness in government.

All legislatures allow people to watch and listen to their debates. But an AP review of open-government policies found that many state legislatures allow closed-door caucus meetings in which a majority of lawmakers discuss policy positions before public debates. Others have restrictions on taking photos and videos of legislative proceedings. In some places,

lawmakers have no obligation to disclose personal financial information that could reveal conflicts of interest.

Legislators possess the power to change that but are sometimes reluctant to act.

A bill advancing this year in Massachusetts, for example, would strengthen the state's public-records laws by limiting fees and setting new deadlines for state agencies and municipalities to comply. Yet it would continue to exempt lawmakers.

That mirrors the way things work in Washington, D.C. Congress exempted itself when it passed the national Freedom of Information Act 50 years ago. The president and his immediate staff also are exempt. By contrast, many governors are subject to state sunshine laws.

In many states, the public-records requirements passed by lawmakers present "a stunning contradiction," said Charles Davis, dean of the College of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Georgia and a former executive director of the National Freedom of Information Coalition.

"I have just always found it astonishing that they would put those requirements on public officials throughout government and exempt themselves at the same time," he said.

To gauge compliance with public-records laws, the AP sent requests to the top Democratic and Republican lawmakers in all states and most governors seeking copies of their daily schedules and emails from their government accounts for the week of Feb. 1 to Feb. 7. Of the more than 170 lawmakers who responded by mid-March, a majority denied the requests by claiming they were legally exempt. The governors were slower to respond but more often provided the information.

The legislative denials came from lawmakers of both parties,

although slightly more from Republicans. In states where some lawmakers said “yes” and others “no,” it was more often the majority party lawmakers who denied the requests while a minority party leader complied.

In Missouri, Senate President Pro Tem Ron Richard was asked in front of dozens of reporters and editors whether he would release his government emails and daily calendars.

“All you have to do is ask for it, and I’ll give it to you. I don’t care,” Richard told those attending a statewide press association event in February.

Yet when the AP subsequently submitted an open-records request, Richard reversed course. A Senate administrator responded on his behalf with a letter saying that individual lawmakers aren’t subject to the Missouri Sunshine Law. Richard, who is in his first year as the Senate’s top lawmaker, explained that he learned his predecessors had determined they were exempt, and he didn’t want to break with precedent.

“I’m telling you I don’t hide anything in my emails. I just don’t do that,” said Richard, a Republican from Joplin.

Mississippi House Speaker Philip Gunn responded with a denial letter asserting his emails and calendars were his personal property, not subject to the Mississippi Public Records Act and protected “under the doctrine of legislative immunity” dating back hundreds of years to English common law.

Denial letters on behalf of Illinois’ top Democratic and Republican lawmakers said, among other things, that releasing the records could amount to a “clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy” for individuals who contacted lawmakers without expecting their names to appear in the news media.

An attorney for Kentucky’s legislature said secrecy was needed “to encourage effective and frank communications.”

“Arranging honors for our fallen heroes, seeking options for Kentuckians with substance abuse problems or counseling citizens regarding confidential problems are all in a day’s work for our members,” wrote Kentucky legislative general counsel Morgain Sprague. “These communications have always been protected by law.”

If lawmakers followed the same open-records rules that apply to others in government, the potential for some sensitive content being revealed would not be a reason for denying access to all of their emails. Rather, they could redact or withhold particular emails covered by various sunshine law exceptions while releasing the rest.

In several states, lawmakers who provided their records did withhold certain emails that they considered to be exempt from disclosure.

Texas Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick, who is the Republican head of the Senate, released 48 pages of emails but withheld the rest pending a request for a state attorney general’s opinion on whether confidential communications between elected officials and citizens are shielded from disclosure.

New Mexico lawmakers released hundreds of emails, mainly from constituents, but withheld three under an exemption for correspondence with certain legislative staff. They also released copies of their daily calendars showing breakfasts and dinners sponsored by industry and interest groups.

Lawmakers in Florida, which has one of the more expansive sunshine laws, freely released emails from people urging them to support or oppose particular bills. They also released calendars showing meetings with lobbyists for dentists, hospitals, teachers, the aerospace industry and others. The schedule for House Minority Leader Mark Pafford even included his morning exercise time and his flight itinerary for a trip to Washington, D.C.

“This is the people’s government. If somebody finds out I’m doing a workout or having a doctor’s appointment at a certain time, that’s OK,” said Pafford, a Democrat from West Palm Beach.

In Alaska, three of the top four lawmakers declined the AP’s request, explaining that their records can be kept confidential under the state constitution and “the deliberative process privilege.” But Senate President Kevin Meyer, a Republican from Anchorage, provided his calendar and let an AP reporter look at his email inbox as an aide scrolled through it.

Open-records advocates said such case-by-case allowances ultimately leave it to the whims of whoever is in power to decide what the public can see.

“The problem with that is that’s just an act of legislative mercy,” said Davis, of the University of Georgia, “and tomorrow they might have an absolutely identical document that they decide not to give you, because you have no legal right to it.”

Associated Press writers Adam Beam in Frankfort, Ky.; Becky Bohrer in Juneau, Alaska; Morgan Lee in Santa Fe, N.M.; William March in Tallahassee; John O’Connor in Springfield, Ill.; Emily Wagster Pettus in Jackson, Miss.; Bob Salsberg in Boston; and Will Weissert in Austin, Texas, contributed to this report.

Anderson on top of podium at

worlds in China

Jamie Anderson of Meyers won the big air competition at the 2016 Corona World Championships of Snowboarding in Yabuli, China, today.

Finland's Peetu Piiroinen was the winner for the men. Kyle Mack of the U.S. came to the second place, followed by Sebastien Toutant of Canada in third.

Enni Rukajarvi of Finland second for the women, with Jessika Jenson of the U.S. in third.

Avalanche warning issued for LT Basin

The Sierra Avalanche Center has issued a backcountry avalanche warning through Monday at 7am. The warning is for the Lake Tahoe Basin, north to Yuba Pass and south to Ebbetts Pass.

Wind slabs and snow slabs are a problem at and above tree line, according to the center.

"Natural and human triggered avalanches are expected today and should not be a surprise to backcountry travelers. Travel in or below avalanche terrain is not recommended. Large destructive avalanches may occur," the center said.

The National Weather Service in Reno has issued a winter storm warning through 11am March 13 for the basin.

Squaw's Sullivan retires from skiing

By Associated Press

KVITFJELL, Norway – American skier Marco Sullivan ended his 15-year-long World Cup career on Sunday, a day after competing in his record 105th downhill race.



Marco
Sullivan

Sullivan competed in 167 World Cup races, including more downhills than any other American skier.

The Squaw Valley resident said: "I depart with a lifetime of memories and the fulfillment of my childhood dream to be one of the fastest ski racers in the world."

Sullivan, 35, says he's "beyond grateful to everybody who has helped and inspired me along the way. I am going to miss this life like crazy but can't wait to see what the next chapter holds."

He won slalom bronze at the 2000 junior world championships

but soon specialized in speed events, winning his sole World Cup race in France in 2008.

Soroptimist recognizes efforts of young writers

Each year, Soroptimist International of Tahoe Sierra recognizes South Tahoe Middle School seventh- and eighth-grade students for their writing skills.

The writing festival begins in students' language arts class, when the teachers assign them a writing project. Each student uses the same prompt, and develops an essay to support his or her opinion.

The seventh-grade was: "Privacy vs National Security" and the eighth-grade students were tasked with "Who should be the first female presidential candidate and why?".

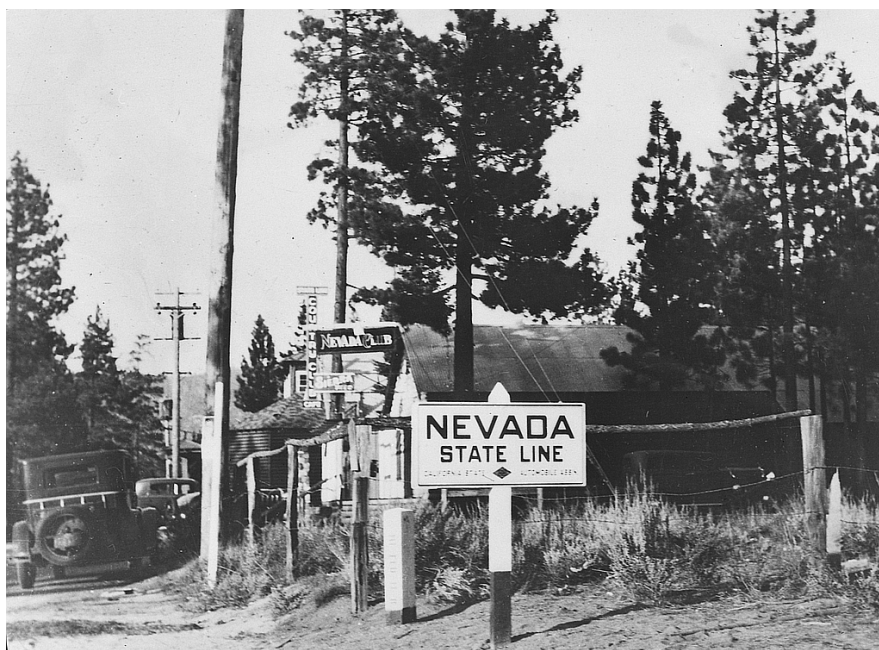
Each of the students received a certificate and a cash award, and attended a presentation with their family members and teachers last week at the SITS meeting.

Then and now: 85 years of Nevada gaming



The Nevada Club at Stateline in 1931. Part of the "Welcome to Nevada" border sign is visible at right. Photo/Lake Tahoe Historical Society

Eight-five years ago this week, on March 19, 1931, Nevada passed legislation to restore legalized gambling in the state. Gambling had been legal in Nevada previously between 1869 and 1910. The Nevada Club was Tahoe's first South Shore Nevada casino.



The Nevada Club and Country Club & Cafe.
Photo/Lake Tahoe Historical Society

The neighboring Country Club & Cafe and others soon followed. The Nevada state line sign shown was posted by the California State Automobile Association. Just beyond and left of that sign is the short white monolith with "California" and "Nevada" vertically engraved on opposing sides. A taller version of that marker was spotlighted in the romantic comedy "40 Pounds of Trouble" filmed here in 1962. It starred Tony Curtis and Suzanne Pleshette. The Nevada Club and the Country Club later became Sahati's Stateline Country Club.



State Line Country Club in the early 1950s. Photo/Cefalu collection/Lake Tahoe Historical Society

Bill Harrah bought the Sahati properties in the late 1950s and remodeled them into Tahoe Harrah's by 1959. In past years, friends of mine who worked at Harrah's told me that some remnants of Sahati's early stage and dressing rooms area still existed deep in Harrah's catacombs.



The original 1931 Nevada Club site as seen now 2016. Photo/Bill Kingman

**Luxury lodge steps from
Northstar skiing, biking**



Relaxation is a dominant feature of staying at the Northstar Lodge. Photo/Susan Wood

By Susan Wood

TRUCKEE – And a one, and a two and now three buildings are going up at the new Northstar Lodge across from the ski resort's village. This is a Welk Resorts timeshare property operated by the famous family.

Lawrence Welk had a penchant for fine things, and it shows in the latest 4-star mountain version of his resort cluster that started in Escondido and expanded into Palm Springs, Cabo San Lucas and Branson, Mo. – the country-western capital of the United States. Breckenridge, Colo., another Vail Resorts stronghold, is up next for the Welk group. It will launch in 18 months, then Poipu on the island of Kauai in 2019. The American musician and waltz king died in 1992. His grandson now runs the Welk properties, marking 50 years in business last year.

Each property has its own character. Branson is known as “a very big show town,” Northstar Lodge General Manager Michelle Morikawa told *Lake Tahoe News* on a recent visit. Escondido in San Diego County marks a historic journey that began as a trailer park. Palm Springs is elegant in appearance. Pictures of Cabo make one want to pack a swimsuit and grab an umbrella drink.

The Northstar Lodge, which started out in the first building as a Hyatt property, is structured as a timeshare property with mostly fractional owners and 11 whole owners who sublet their units. One can buy into a unit for 240,000 points equaling one week a year at a value of \$30,000.



A third building on the property

is almost complete; and it, too,
will have pool views.
Photo/Susan Wood

The Welks' core values are all about family, so the principle translates into its business.

"Our primary selling point focuses on quality time with family. (Having this) forces you to take a vacation," Morikawa said.

From the looks of the entire fourth floor of the second building dedicated as a sales preview center, prospective owners can dream big on how they plan to spend that quality time. There's even a digital map of the world that indicates unit purchases at all Welk Resorts in real time. It's mesmerizing to follow. The company boasts more than 50,000 owners.

Accents and touches make the property unique. With the first structure called the Washoe building labeled "mountain traditional" and the second called the Fremont considered "mountain contemporary," they both offer something different and special. The third structure being built now will be called the Snowshoe building named after another famous Tahoe name – John "Snowshoe" Thompson, who delivered the mail from Placerville to Genoa carrying a 90-pound pack on 11-foot skinny skis with a balancing pole during the 1800s. The up-and-coming building now marked by a large crane one can watch from the swimming pool patio will have 32 units with 2-, 3- and 5-bedrooms with lock-offs.

Since this is the Tahoe-Truckee area, Morikawa reminded *LTN* that the LEED-certified property had to follow a master mountain association set of guidelines.

"We need to stay conducive to the setting," she added. The property blends into the mountainside and remains limited on

how much it may expand in footprint.

Nonetheless, what it has runs big in terms of things mountain visitors seek. Having its own on-site underground parking structure at a resort known for challenging parking issues would be reason alone to buy.

This attention to detail in satisfying owners is so important to Morikawa that she hired snowboard instructor Casey Dowling to fill the role as concierge extraordinaire in fulfilling owners' and guests' requests for activities. One such popular activity is "ride with Casey" where one can get up-close-and-personal guidance from this snowboarding expert.

And talk about convenient. Just ask Jacquelyn Derian and Zach Boebel. They were using her brother-in-law's unit and were so comfortable that they graced the property carrying their snowboards in their robes.

"We like the amenities," Derian Boebel said.



A full-size kitchen makes long stays comfortable with not having to eat out every night. Photo/Susan Wood

This nearly ski-in, ski-out property makes it easy to get up on the backside of Northstar for first turns with a ski and boot valet feet from accessing the 5-diamond Ritz-Carlton Lake Tahoe's Highlands Gondola. Afterward, one may partake in the après ski feel by walking through the village and having a cocktail in the cushy seating next to the ice rink or cozying up to the fire at TC's Pub with a brew and fiery chili.

Then again, the Northstar Lodge is comfy enough to find refuge for the night – holing up in a unit to watch the Super Bowl, watching a movie in a private theater complete with oversized chairs with cup holders, playing a game of billiards in the next-door recreation center, doing laps in the 25-meter pool,

chilling in one of two hot tubs, consuming gooey s'mores by the fire pit on the Sierra Terrace or playing chess in the large community room in the Washoe building.

"People come up for winter, and not everybody skis," Morikawa said.

For those who want to just relax in the unit, there are plenty of modern conveniences and considerations for the discerning tastes.

On the counter where it's easy for at least four people to belly up to the large kitchen's activities, a cocktail shaker, ice bucket and corkscrew await the owner. The tasteful cabinetry is stocked with all the modern conveniences. Stainless steel appliances create a welcoming look. There's no reason to go out, unless there's no desire to cook – especially with the rich sound of a Bose stereo system set up in the kitchen to keep the party going.

The units have a distinctively warm feel. All the fireplaces help with that. In the two-bedroom unit, a gas fireplace creates ambience and warmth in each room, along with another in the living room and yet a fourth on the patio.

The barn-wood adorning the walls plastered with upscale art make the place friendly. The fixtures are new. Welk Resorts set out its own brand of environmentally friendly toiletries labeled "Ecology." Welk Resorts even conducted smell tests for the brand. Speaking of, the bathrooms are an experience all their own. Both bathrooms adjoining the bedrooms have oversized tubs and huge showers. And the soft bathrobes can keep one inside for the day.

The amenities don't end there. If one wants to venture out, there's a babysitting service for those with youngsters to look after.

Services expand into all seasons. Northstar is known for more

than skiing. It has a world-class mountain bike park. With that in mind, the Lodge comes with bike storage.

When an owner runs out of ideas, Northstar Village has its own set of events. The minute a guest arrives, the front desk worker hands over a list of activities to launch the stay.

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Notes:

- Northstar Lodge is located across from the Northstar Village at the base of the Northstar-at-Tahoe ski resort off Highway 267 in Truckee.
- Telephone: 530.562.3900.